

New London Bridge (State Trunk Highway 54 Bridge)
Spanning Embarrass River, on State Trunk
Highway 54
New London vicinity
Outagamie County
Waupaca County
Wisconsin

HAER No. WI-29

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record
National Park Service
U. S. Department of the Interior
P. O. Box 37127
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HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

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New London Bridge
(State Trunk Highway 54 Bridge)

HAER No. WI-29

Location: Spanning Embarrass River, on State Trunk Highway 54,
1.5 miles north of New London, Outagamie and Waupaca
counties, Wisconsin

UTM: 16.361725.4917885
Quad: New London

Date of Construction: 1933-1934

Builder: Engineer: State Highway Commission
Contractor: Wisconsin Bridge and Iron Company

Present Owner: State of Wisconsin

Present Use: Vehicular traffic

Significance: In cooperation with the United States Bureau of Public
Roads, the Wisconsin Highway Commission arranged to
build the New London Bridge in 1933 along a frequently
traveled highway in Outagamie and Waupaca counties.
The Wisconsin Bridge and Iron Company, a prominent
bridge-building firm in the State, fabricated and
erected the five-span, 595-foot structure. The deck
truss spans the Embarrass River and an abandoned
Chicago and Northwestern Railway line. A distinctive
feature includes a square cut-out in the truss members
above the railroad track, apparently to accommodate
the height of the passing trains.

Historian: Diane Kromm
Wisconsin Historic Bridge Recording Project
Summer 1987

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New London is located in two counties, Outagamie and Waupaca, at the confluence of the Wolf and Embarrass rivers. In 1928, it had a population of 4,670. The New London Bridge, 1.5 miles north of the city and also crossing the county line, carries vehicular traffic across the Embarrass River and an abandoned Chicago Northwestern railway line (at one time, the railroad line linked New London with the nearby community of Clintonville). In the mid-1910s, the State Highway Commission took over the road and it became known as Highway 54. The route crosses Outagamie County, extending west into Waupaca County to the city of Waupaca, 22 miles away. In the late 1920s, the State rerouted 6-1/2 miles of the highway northwest of the city. Soon afterwards, State officials began plans to erect a new bridge. In February 1931, the State Highway Commission bridge department conducted a bridge survey for the site. The commission expected to build the bridge with state aid in 1931 and let the contract by November 15, 1931. The only problem that might have interfered with construction was mid-summer flooding. The Wisconsin Bridge and Iron Company submitted drawings to the commission in October 1933, and soon began fabrication. The specifications included how to paint the bridge: one coat of red lead and oil paint in the shop, and two layers of white lead and oil paint in the field.¹

The New London Bridge is a five-span deck truss, totaling 595 feet in length with a 24-foot roadway. The individual riveted spans measure: 95 feet 6 inches; 96 feet 6 inches; 141 feet 0 inches; 118 feet 0 inches; and 140 feet 0 inches. A distinctive feature in the truss design is the break above the tracks to accommodate the height of the trains. According to the drawings, the concrete piers appear to be reinforced with steel. In 1972, the State Highway Commission approved the placing of a new concrete overlay on the bridge.²

FOOTNOTES

- 1 Wisconsin Gazateer and Business Directory, 1927-1928, listing under New London; Outagamie County, Board of Supervisors, Proceedings, 1930-1931, p. 166; Wisconsin Highway Commission, Bridge Survey (February 3, 1931), Bridge Plan, Specifications, Drawings (October 1933). (Wisconsin Department of Transportation--Bridge Section, Microfilm Reel F44, B-44/68-900).
- 2 Wisconsin Highway Commission, Correspondence (1972) regarding New London Bridge maintenance. (Wisconsin Department of Transportation--Bridge Section, Microfilm Reel F44, B-44/68-900); Wisconsin Department of Transportation--Bridge Section, New London Bridge Card, B-44/68-900.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bridge Plate. New London Bridge: 1934/New London Bridge/U. S. Public Works Project. N.R.M. 435H - Built by Wisconsin Highway Commission in cooperation with U. S. Bureau of Public Roads/contractor Wisconsin Bridge & Iron Co., Milwaukee, Wisconsin.
- Outagamie County. Board of Supervisors. Proceedings. 1926-1934. No mention of New London Bridge.
- Press Republican (New London). This newspaper needs to be searched. Staff members at the New London historical society, library and museum could find no information on the New London Bridge, but they all recommended looking at this local newspaper.
- Waupaca County. Board of Supervisors. Proceedings. 1929-1933. No mention of New London Bridge.
- Wisconsin Gazateer and Business Directory, 1927-1928, listing under New London.
- Wisconsin Highway Commission. Survey (February 3, 1931), Specifications, Drawings (October 1933), relating to New London Bridge. (Wisconsin Department of Transportation--Bridge Section, Microfilm Reel F44, Bridge B-44/68-900; see also Bridge Card File).
- Wyatt, Barbara, ed. "Iron and Steel Truss Highway Bridges," in Cultural Resource Management in Wisconsin, vol. 2. Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1986.